United Nations A/54/761

General Assembly

Distr.: General
21 February 2000
English
Original: Russian

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 116
Human rights questions

Letter dated 18 February 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you the text of a letter dated 18 February 2000 from the Acting President of the Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir V. Putin, to the President of the Republic of Latvia, Mrs. Vaira Vike-Freiberga, concerning the sentencing by the Riga District Court of Mr. V. M. Kononov, a veteran of the Second World War (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 116.

(*Signed*) S. **Lavrov**

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Annex

Letter dated 18 February 2000 from the Acting President of the Russian Federation addressed to the President of the Republic of Latvia

On 21 January 2000, the Riga District Court sentenced Mr. V. M. Kononov, a 77-year-old veteran of the Second World War and a former partisan, to six years' imprisonment on the charge of "war crimes".

The sentence has stunned everyone in the Russian Federation.

I receive many letters from human rights and veterans' organizations and from private citizens calling upon me to contribute to a just settlement of this case and not to allow, for the first time in international practice, a man to be convicted for his struggle against fascism. Such letters express the concern that the decision handed down by the Riga District Court can serve as a precedent for the persecution of people who fought on the side of the States of the anti-Hitler coalition.

From a legal point of view, the sentence is inconsistent with the norms of international law and the decisions of the Nuremberg tribunal.

I cannot help drawing your attention to the humanitarian aspect: the convicted person is a seriously ill old man who has already spent a year and a half in prison.

I appeal to you to use all your powers and authority to review this cruel and unjust sentence.

If Mr. Kononov is released, we are prepared to receive him and his family in the Russian Federation.

I wish to emphasize that the Russian Federation will continue to base its relations with Latvia on the development of the situation with respect to the whole range of humanitarian questions. In this connection, I am convinced that your settlement of the case of Mr. Kononov would be appreciated in the Russian Federation and would be in keeping with the long-term interests of Russian-Latvian relations.

(*Signed*) V. **Putin**
Acting President of the
Russian Federation